Majestic 12 Documents - UFO Evidence

Summary: Overview article on the Majestic documents.

"Circumstantial evidence is a very tricky thing," answered Holmes thoughtfully. "It may seem to point very straight to one thing, but if you shift your own point of view a little, you may find it pointing in an equally uncompromising manner to something entirely different..."

The Boscombe Valley Mystery -Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Before 1987, few people in UFOlogy outside Bill Moore's circle of associates had heard of Jaime Shandera. Shandera was not a UFOlogist, but a producer of video documentaries for companies like Time-Life and RKO General. That's why it's all the more mysterious as to why he was chosen to be the recipient of the biggest UFO story of the 1980s.

According to him, he was sitting at home reading Variety on the evening of December 11, 1984, when he heard someone drop something through the mail slot in his front door. Going to investigate, he found a brown envelope with an Albuquerque, New Mexico postmark containing a canister of exposed but undeveloped black & white 35mm film. He was supposed to meet Bill Moore for dinner at the Villa Sunset restaurant, so he took the film with him. When he showed it to Moore, dinner was postponed indefinitely. They went to Moore's house and Moore developed the film in his kitchen. Moore, Shandera, and Stanton Friedman would spend two years trying to verify the authenticity of the documents that they found on the film.

The documents, which became known as the MJ-12 Documents, were an eight page briefing paper to President Eisenhower detailing a UFO crash at Roswell, New Mexico in 1947, another crash at El Indio, Texas in 1950, and listing the members of the government's special Majestic-12 or "MJ-12" UFO group. It was dated "18 November, 1952", and it gave Admiral Roscoe H. Hillenkoetter as the briefing officer. There was also a memo from President Harry S Truman to Secretary of Defense Forrestal that authorized the creation of the MJ-12 group.

The members of the Majestic twelve group were:

Rear Admiral Roscoe H. Hillenkoetter, who was the first Director of the CIA from 1947 to 1950. He was also later on the board of directors of NICAP (National Investigation Committee on Aerial Phenomenon).

Dr. Vannevar Bush, chairman of the National Defense Research Commission and Office of Scientific Research and Development during World War II. Also Chairman of the National Advisory Committee on Aeronautics, which became NASA, from 1939 to 1941. Also chairman of the Joint Research and Development Board from 1945 to 1948. 1947 - made a Director of AT&T.

James V. Forrestal, Secretary of the Navy from 1945 to 1947 and the first Secretary of Defense from 1947 to 1949. In 1949, he had a mental breakdown and committed suicide at Bethesda Naval Hospital.

General Nathan F. Twining, Commander of the USAAF Air Materiel Command at Wright Field from 1945 to 1947.

General Hoyt Vandenburg, Chief of Military Intelligence during World War II, second Director of Central Intelligence from 1946 to 1947, Chief of the Air Staff in 1947, Chief of Staff of the U. S. Air Force from 1948 to 1953.

Dr. Detlev Bronk, member of the Scientific Advisory Committee of the Brookhaven National Laboratories, Chairman of the National Research Council from 1946 to 1950, President of the National Academy of Sciences from 1950 to 1962, President of Johns Hopkins University. Advisory member of the Atomic Energy Commission.

Dr. Jerome Hunsaker, Chairman of the Departments of Aeronautical and Mechanical Engineering at M.I.T. from 1933 to 1951, Chairman of the National Advisory Committee on Aeronautics (later NASA)from 1941 to 1956.

Rear Admiral Sidney Souers(retired), first Director of Central Intelligence (1946), first Executive Secretary of the National Security Council from 1947 to 1950. Special consultant to President Truman on intelligence matters.

Gordon Gray, Assistant Secretary of the Army from 1947 to 1949. Secretary of the Army from 1949 to 1950. Special Assistant to President Harry S Truman. Senior Staff Assistant to Eisenhower. Chairman of the CIA Psychological Strategy Board. President of the University of North Carolina. President Eisenhower's Assistant Secretary of Defense for Security Affairs.

Donald Menzel, professor of astrophysics at Harvard from 1939 to 1971. Chairman, Department of Astronomy from 1946 to 1949. Notorious debunker of UFO sightings. He led a double life, having a "top-secret ultra" security clearance, as a consultant for the CIA and the NSA.

Dr. Lloyd V. Berkner, Executive Secretary of the Research and Development Board from 1946 to 1947. Directed studies of Weapons Systems Evaluations. Also a member of the CIA's secret "Robertson Panel" on UFOs.

Major General Robert M. Montague, Commanding Officer at White Sands Proving Ground and later head of a secret project at Sandia Base, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

The next year, Bill Moore received an unusual postal card that had been sent to his old address in Dewey, Arizona, then forwarded to Los Angeles. The picture on the front was of Ethiopia, but the card was postmarked New Zealand. The card was unsigned, but it had a cryptic message typed on the back, of which Moore and Shandera will only reveal a portion:

Add zest to your trip to Washington
Try Reeses pieces;
For a stylish look

try Suit Land

Supposedly, Stanton Friedman gave them a solution when he mentioned that a large group of top-secret Air Force Intelligence files were being declassified at the satellite facility of the National Archives at Suitland, Maryland.

Moore and Shandera went to Suitland and began sifting through the files of Record Group 341, and after three days of searching, Shandera found a memo dated 7/14/54 from Robert Cutler, who was special assistant to President Eisenhower, to General Nathan Twining. The memo stated:

The President has decided that the MJ-12/SSP briefing should take place during the already scheduled White House meeting of July 16 rather than following it as previously intended.

The memo seemed to provide independent verification of the existence of the MJ-12 Group.

In late 1992, three more Majestic documents appeared, this time received by a California UFO investigator named Tim Cooper. Cooper also received more documents in 1993, which Stanton Friedman investigated.

Finally, in March of 1994,yet another roll of 35mm film appeared. This time delivered to Don Berliner, Friedman's co-author on Crash at Corona. This one is part of a handbook detailing how to handle recovered debris and bodies from a UFO crash and is called The MJ-12 Operations Manual. Berliner turned it over to the General Accounting Office for investigation.

PART 2

Sherlock Holmes laughed heartily. "We will come to that in its turn," said he. "I will lay an account of the case before you in its due order, showing you the various points which guided me in my decision. Pray interrupt me if there is any inference which is not perfectly clear to you."
"It is of the highest importance in the art of detection to be able to recognize, out of a number of facts, which are incidental and which are vital. Otherwise your energy and attention must be dissipated instead of being concentrated."

(The Reigate Puzzle -Sir Arthur Conan Doyle)

Are the MJ-12 documents authentic? Phil Klass says no. Kevin Randle says no. Carl Sagan said no. Curtis Peebles says no. Jacques Vallee says no. The National Archives say no. The FBI says no. The Air Force says no. When the GAO was conducting its Roswell investigation for Congressman Steven Schiff, it asked the same government agencies involved in that investigation to also check their records for anything on "MJ-12" or "Majestic". All of them reported that nothing could be found that mentioned either term. The final analysis was that the MJ-12 documents are forgeries.

Phil Klass and others have pointed out "flaws" in the documents themselves that signal them as being forgeries. Here are some of the criticisms, rebuttals, and my own humble comments:

Point:

Until the computer age, the U.S. military used a date format of: day month year, as in: 7 July 1947. No commas at all, and no zero place holder if the day was a single digit. Civilian date format was and is like this: July 7, 1947. But the MJ-12 documents use a date format like this: 07 July, 1947. This date format is not military or civilian standard, then or now, in the United States. Critics say Rear Admiral Hillenkoetter, the supposed author of the MJ-12 briefing paper would have used either the civilian format or the miltary standard format.

Rebuttal:

In Top Secret/Majic, Stanton Friedman names several examples that he says show that the "wrong" format was in common use. He says one such example is "in Timothy Good's Above Top Secret(page 446)". He also names several European, English, and NATO sources as proof.

Comment:

The document on page 446 of my copy of Above Top Secret has the U.S. civilian format of "February 26, 1942", so it doesn't prove Friedman's point at all. The Timothy Good book has lots of declassified government documents in the appendix, and all of the American documents use either the standard military format or standard civilian format. Since the MJ-12 documents were written by and for Americans, I can't see where European or NATO or even Canadian documents have any bearing at all.

Point:

Rank is another problem with the documents, the critics say. Hillenkoetter was not an Admiral as the documents refer to him, he was a REAR Admiral. There is a difference of two stars there. While a civilian might make such an error, a military officer would never do such a thing. Military men say such errors are just not made. It would be like a Lieutenant calling himself "Captain".

Rebuttal:

Friedman says "a group with six military members and six civilians could not possibly make distinctions on the basis of military rank."

Comment:

I don't think Friedman addresses the point here. The point is that a military officer such as Hillenkoetter would never give his own rank incorrectly as is done in the briefing document. It has nothing to do with "distinctions on the basis of military rank".

Point:

The documents also refer to "Roswell Army Air Base (now Walker Field)". Army Air Corps installations were referred to as "Field" from 1943 to 1947. After 1947, when the Air Force became a separate entity, the term "base" was used. So, if authentic, the quote would read "Roswell Army Air Field" (now Walker Air Force Base).

Rebuttal:

Hillenkoetter was in the Navy, not the Air Force. He might not have been conversationally familiar with the air field nomenclature changes that had taken place in 1947.

Comment:

Gotta go with Friedman on this one.

Point:

The documents also use terms that were not in use in 1952. It uses "media" instead of "press". In 1952, people said "press". Media did not come into usage until the 1960s. Neither did "impacted" (as a verb), or "extra-terrestrial". "Alien" was the term used in 1952.

Rebuttal:

None found.

Comment:

All I can find on this is that the term "media" became popular in the sixties. "Press" would indeed have been used before then, so "media" stands out like the clock "striking" in Julius Caesar. I could find nothing on "impacted" as a verb. I doubt if "extra-terrestrial" was in wide use in 1952 except maybe by readers of pulp SF magazines.

Point:

Page six of the document lists the attachments. The only attachment that was included with the documents is Attachment "A", "Special Classified Executive Order #092447." The problem here is that "092447" is the date of the order; it doesn't follow the standard numbering system for executive orders.

Rebuttal:

This is not an ordinary "Executive Order". We have no idea of the numbering system for "Special Classified Executive Orders". Friedman says: "As I found in a quiet but extensive visit to the George C. Marshall Archives, the State Department normally used the date as part of filing nomenclature."

Comments:

So the State Department used dates as part of filing nomeclature. So what? The MJ-12 group, if it existed, reported directly to the President. The only cabinet department secretary in it was Forrestal, and he was Secretary of Defense, not of State. Even top-secret executive orders used the usual numbering system.

Point:

Attachment "A" is a memorandum from President Harry Truman to Secretary of Defense Forrestal establishing the Majestic Twelve group. A problem with the memorandum is Truman's signature. It's exactly like one on an authentic memo to Vannevar Bush signed by Truman on 10/1/47. No one writes their name exactly the same twice.

Rebuttal:

The two signatures are not identical, even allowing for "stretching" by a photocopier. They are very similar, but there are differences. Besides, people sometimes do write their name identically twice according to some experts.

Comment:

Without seeing a lot of expert testimony, I can't comment on this one.

Point:

The Cutler-Twining Memo is stamped "Top-Secret Restricted Information". There was no such classification in 1954. It did not come into use until the Nixon Administration.

Rebuttal:

Friedman points out that he found varied security markings during his examinations of formerly classified documents.

Comment:

Yeah, but Friedman hasn't shown any with "Top-Secret Restricted Information" on them.

Point:

The Cutler-Twining memo refers to a National Security Council meeeting on July 16, 1954. There are no records of a National Security Council Meeting on July 16, 1954.

Rebuttal:

The memo merely refers to a meeting. It doesn't say "National Security Council Meeting".

Comment:

Friedman is right. It just says "meeting".

Point:

The Cutler-Twining memo is not an Air Force document. The box of documents that Moore & Shandera were examining consisted exclusively of recently declassified Air Force Intelligence documents. The memo was out of place in that box. Also, the memo was not registered as having been examined and declassified by the Air Force Intelligence declassification personnel who had audited that box for declassification. It is extremely unlikely that they could have overlooked the memo.

Rebuttal:

It was impossible for Moore or Shandera to smuggle the document into the Archives unfolded and uncreased. Archive procedures do not allow anyone to bring anything into the examination area.

Comment:

The statements about the document being completely out of place in the box in which it was found are correct. It's also true that it had not been found by the Air Force personnel who had declassified the material in the box. As for whether or not someone could have smuggled the unfolded and uncreased document into the Archives examination area, I think that's a bet that James "The Amazing" Randi would love to take....

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